

The Guerrilla Framer



by
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MAThematically Speaking, The Most Important Sale You Make

In just a matter of weeks, the holiday season will be behind us (no pun intended) and store traffic and sales volume will revert to a slower, non-holiday pace. Naturally, as sales slow down, profits will also diminish. However, there are some things you can do to safeguard your business from a seasonal decline while also building a strong foundation for greater profits in the future.

One of the most important, but often overlooked keys to profitability relates to the sale of mats, or more specifically, the first mat. Selling a single mat with the majority of the frames you sell can dramatically increase your average sale—often by as much as 25% to 40%. To prove it, try this little test.

Select a frame moulding from the samples at your design counter. It can be any frame at any price point. Using the selected moulding, calculate the price to custom frame a 20"x24" picture. Include regular glass, mounting, and labor, but no mats. Now, remeasure and recalculate the price, including your choice of either a standard paper mat, or a conservation

mat around the picture. Compare the two prices. Repeat this using a 24"x36" poster.

The difference in price between matted and non-matted pictures is almost always significant.—sometimes dramatically so. The reason for this increase is quite simple: Placing a mat around a picture makes it larger. And of course, larger picture mean larger frames, larger glass and most important, larger profits.

Mats also enjoy the highest percentage markup of any framing material you sell. Each matboard you purchase will yield at least two finished mats and frequently, several more. Under ideal circumstances, a single \$4.00 matboard can actually generate more than \$100 in retail sales,

almost all of which is profit.

In addition, it's been my experience that customers who purchase matting with their custom frame are generally happier with their purchase. After all, custom matting is what really separates custom framing from high quality ready-made frames found at high-end department stores.

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The Key to Selling Mats

Now that we've covered the value of selling mats, let's examine some of the methods you can use to increase the sale of mats in your frame shop.

There are three things you can do to improve mat sales. The first is to create awareness by emphasizing the importance of mat sales. Make sure your employees, especially those working the design counter, know how much you care about selling mats and how important mat sales are to the success of your business. Hang up a sign that says, "Mats Make The Difference." This will subtly encourage your customers to buy mats while helping your sales staff become more aware of selling them.

The next important step is to

track the percentage of custom frame orders that include a mat. It's helpful to look at your success rate from the previous 30 to 60 days and use it as a baseline for future improvement.

With proper employee training and a focus on selling mats, most frame shops can achieve a sell rate of 80% even when considering that approximately 5% of the frames you sell, such as those for mirrors and canvases, are not matable.

Place a graph on the wall of your meeting area (away from the view of your customers). Chart your mat sales percentage on a weekly basis and watch the numbers increase.

Finally, you'll need to train your employees to sell mats. The trick is to always begin the design

process with mats. The reason for this is simple—once you've quoted a price without a mat, it will be almost impossible to justify the substantial increase in price the addition of a mat will produce.

I recommend showing a double mat. This allows you to remove one if you run into price resistance. I rarely offer triple mats as the degree of difficulty in selecting a third mat color increases geometrically. Also, the space created between the picture and glass may eliminate the opportunity to sell non-glare glass.

Through emphasis, charting, and training you can increase the sale of mats while increasing profits and adding excitement to your frame shop. Remember, "Mats really do make the difference." ■